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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

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18 April 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Employment of
Naval Forces at the Beginning of a War

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". This article is concerned primarily with US carrier and antisubmarine forces in the initial period of a war. Both conventional and nuclear environments are considered. The authors stress the roles of naval aviation and long-range aviation in combat with hostile naval forces, particularly strike carriers and surface vessels hampering antisubmarine operations. This article appeared in Issue 1 (83) for 1968.

2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies.

William E. Nelson
Deputy Director for Operations

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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

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SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Employment of Naval
Forces at the Beginning of a War

SOURCE Documentary
Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue 1 (83) for 1968 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The authors of this article are Captain First Rank N. Vyunenko and Rear Admiral of the Reserve D. Tuz. This article is concerned primarily with US carrier and antisubmarine forces in the initial period of a war. Both conventional and nuclear environments are considered. The authors stress the roles of naval aviation and long-range aviation in combat with hostile naval forces, particularly strike carriers and surface vessels hampering antisubmarine operations.

End of Summary

Comment:

Capt. Vyunenko and Admiral Tuz co-authored two articles, one discussing supplying ships at sea, Tyl I Snabzheniye, Issue No. 7, 1967 and the other about ships which travel on air cushion, Morskoy Sbornik, No. 10, 1966. Capt. Vyunenko has written many articles on naval technological subjects, the most recent appearing in Morsky Sbornik, No. 11, 1973. Military Thought has been published by the USSR Ministry of Defense in three versions in the past--TOP SECRET, SECRET, and RESTRICTED. There is no information as to whether or not the TOP SECRET version continues to be published. The SECRET version is published three times annually and is distributed down to the level of division commander.

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The Employment of Naval Forces at the
Beginning of a War

by

Captain First Rank N. Vyuneneko and
Rear Admiral of the Reserve D. Tuz

Regardless of how a world war begins--with the use of nuclear weapons or without--all forces and means of armed combat may be brought into action at any moment by a prearranged signal.

Since the use of various forces and means in a war begun with nuclear weapons has been elucidated in the press in some detail, we shall examine here the principles of the use of the navy in a war begun without nuclear weapons.

First of all, we should note that in the past the main naval forces of our probable enemies on the eves of wars were located, as a rule, at bases or in areas that lay adjacent to them and, consequently, were separated by broad expanses of neutral waters. This created the conditions for a surprise attack and the delivery of the first, extremely powerful strike against the enemy main forces for the purpose of weakening him as much as possible at the start of a war, or at least depriving him of the initiative in operations at sea. History shows that surprise attacks of this kind have often been successful.*

But now the conditions for surprise launching of military operations at sea by the delivery of an unexpected strike against enemy naval forces have changed substantially. Missile/nuclear weapons have forced the navies of all the leading naval powers not only to switch to dispersed basing of their forces, but also continually to keep the greatest possible part of them at sea. Thus, the coastal areas have now lost their former significance as centers of

* For example, the surprise attack by the Japanese against the main forces of the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor.

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the main operations of navies which take surprise actions at the beginning of a war.

On the other hand, surprise strikes with non-nuclear means against enemy groupings dispersed in seas and oceans, or in extensive basing areas, cannot radically alter the balance of forces in a short interval of time.

But this does not mean that the element of surprise in operations at the start of a war against the main enemy naval strike groupings has lost its significance at the present time. On the contrary, it has become a necessary condition for the attainment of goals, especially in view of the fact that ship strike groupings of opposing navies that are deployed in seas and remain at full combat readiness try, as a rule, to maintain constant mutual contact, in order to be able, at the right moment, to deliver an immediate preemptive strike and seize the initiative.

We must also bear in mind that the military-geographic conditions of seas and oceans are favorable to the probable enemy in the use of missile weapons from submarines against the territory of the Soviet Union and make it possible for him to organize mobile basing of forces. Incidentally, considerable efforts in this area have been expended by the American and British navies in the postwar years.

To support missile/nuclear strikes against objectives on our territory, the Americans have created cosmic radio-electronic and hydroacoustical navigational systems which make it possible to launch Polaris missiles with sufficient accuracy from almost any area of the World Ocean. Therefore, possible launch site areas for submarines are limited only by the zone from which missiles can reach designated targets.

However, in a war begun with non-nuclear weapons these very important enemy groupings, with more than one-third of all strategic missiles concentrated in them, turn into passive waiting forces, unable to make immediate use of their powerful long-range weapons. Moreover, by remaining in the zone of operations of the antisubmarine forces of the other side, they require additional defense or protection

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from strikes and attacks. Consequently, nuclear missile submarines are becoming the most important objective that its naval forces must defend, requiring the allocation for this purpose of large groupings that cannot in effect be used to fulfil tasks of an offensive nature.

✓ The role of carrier strike large units in a war begun with non-nuclear weapons should be assessed in a completely different manner. They will be the principal and most universal part of enemy naval strike forces. It is not impossible that in this case all or almost all strike aircraft carriers* will turn out to be in the first strategic echelon, which in itself will predetermine their role as primary objectives of strikes for our navy and long-range aviation. 50X1-HUM

The most important component part of the navy of our probable enemy, and which is also constantly deployed in seas and oceans, are the special antisubmarine forces that are combined into independent operational formations.

✓ * Over the next 10 to 15 years the American navy plans to continually have 15 strike aircraft carriers carrying more than 1300 aircraft, including 700 able to carry nuclear weapons. Judging from the experience gained in exercises of recent years, the Americans can use as a strategic reserve up to eight strike aircraft carriers, including four in the Atlantic Ocean and four in the Pacific, not counting seven aircraft carriers operating in the first strategic echelon.

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in the period of military operations without the use of nuclear weapons it is difficult for submarines to overcome.

The early deployment and constant maintenance of combat readiness by the probable enemy of his nuclear strike groupings directly in the areas where he will use his weapons, has made it necessary for our fleets to carry out constant combat service in oceans and seas. In practice, our naval forces, located in the deployment areas of enemy strike groupings, carry out continual observation of them and keep them within range of our weapons, so as to be able, upon receipt of orders, to deliver a devastating strike against them. In this process, part of our forces are set aside for the destruction of enemy strike groupings in the first minutes and hours of the war, regardless of whether nuclear weapons are used or not.

It should be noted that the appearance of Soviet ships on combat service in the Mediterranean Sea, the North Atlantic, and the Philippine Sea at first only caused confusion among the Americans. Subsequently they often made attempts at direct countermeasures in the form of systematic buzzing of ships by aircraft and helicopters at low altitudes, cutting across their course while at a dangerously close distance, and various kinds of provocation including even collisions of ships, as happened in 1966 and 1967 in the Far East.

Such actions by the probable enemy have other purposes as well: the use of systematic provocations to continually harass surface ships and submarines, which can gradually take the form of a local conflict capable of developing into the beginning of a war.

Should war begin without the use of nuclear means, the enemy can use against our navy, including those forces of ours on combat service, only a part of his forces deployed in the areas of combat operations, and then only those which are universal, that is, capable of using both nuclear and non-nuclear weapons. Such forces will be mainly nuclear submarines with conventional torpedoes, carrier strike large units, shore-based aviation, and surface ship groupings of various composition. As for nuclear submarines armed with

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ballistic missiles, their use in combat against our navy is unlikely; their main function is the destruction by nuclear strikes of objectives on land, including naval bases.

Another very important factor in naval operations in a war begun without nuclear weapons will be the fact that each side will try to weaken as much as possible those enemy forces carrying nuclear weapons, especially strategic ones.

From the point of view of the area encompassed, armed combat at sea without the use of nuclear weapons will not differ essentially from operations using nuclear weapons. But the results of armed clashes that develop in the broad expanses of the ocean will turn out to be many times less than with the use of nuclear means. And this is due not only to the fact that the casualty-producing factors of nuclear means are much greater than those of conventional weapons, but also that a considerable part of the strike forces will be held in reserve, remaining in readiness for the employment of nuclear means. Other forces will not be able to make full use of their combat capabilities, since part of their strike power will be held in reserve in the form of nuclear munitions ready for use.

Thus, forces on combat service will be able to wage battle successfully only against individual enemy groupings. But this battle can develop into protracted armed clashes between ship groupings of one side and naval forces of the other that are dispersed over considerable areas.

Under these conditions an important role in the battle will be played by surface vessels with missile and anti-submarine armament. Their capabilities for fulfilling their tasks will be directly related to the power of their anti-aircraft armament, and also to how quickly they are able to receive support from other naval forces. We should not forget that surface vessels, like submarines that are observing enemy ship groupings in peacetime, are themselves targets of observation by the enemy. And if their task is to destroy enemy ships immediately upon the start of war, then the enemy ships may have the same task. In other words, ships on combat service are in a constant duel-type situation. The winner of the duel will be the one who first

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manages to release his missiles, repulse strikes by the enemy, and maintain his combat effectiveness. Thus, the timely support of ships in combat with enemy ships and aircraft is of special significance in achieving victory.

As in the last war, the most effective support force is shore-based aviation. The time spent in deploying aviation is much less than that required to deploy submarine and surface naval forces, and the ability of aviation to destroy surface targets, especially aircraft carriers, is well known. Therefore, in a war begun without nuclear weapons the readiness requirements of naval strike aviation for the delivery of the first strike against enemy ships remain the same as in operations using nuclear weapons.

Surface vessels may also serve as support forces for ships on combat service, but only if they have time during the period of threat to concentrate in strike groupings in immediate proximity to the areas of armed encounters.

The operations of support forces on combat service, especially naval missile-carrying forces, and also long-range aviation, must be directed against those enemy groupings that are preventing our antisubmarine forces from waging combat against enemy submarines. Anything capable of waging direct combat against enemy submarine missile carriers must be dispatched into the areas of their combat patrol in order to destroy these extremely important nuclear means of the enemy. For these same purposes it is essential to destroy shore navigational systems and communications centers which support the operations of enemy missile submarines. To do this, extensive use must be made of diversionary amphibious and airborne landing forces, landed secretly and by surprise from submarines and from aircraft (and in the future, also from air-cushion ships, especially from surface effects vehicles); and use should also be made of submarines with cruise missiles, units of naval missile-carrying and long-range aviation. By joint efforts they can destroy or seize such other important objectives as the early-warning stations of anti-missile defense, reference stations of navigational systems, and communications centers; and they can capture individual islands on which enemy antisubmarine lines depend, or islands on which it is

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advantageous for us to organize supply points for submarines.

The laying of antisubmarine mine barriers on the approaches to enemy submarine base locations also seems justified.

The need to concentrate basic naval efforts in combat against nuclear submarine missile carriers arises not only because they represent the main nuclear threat from naval axes, but also because combat against them can be waged on the whole only by naval forces, which destroy them mainly in the areas of combat patrol and on the approaches to them. Only a minority of missile submarines (10 to 30 percent), and with a lower level of combat readiness besides, can be destroyed at their bases, where it is possible to use other forces for this purpose as well.

Aircraft carriers also carry a large number of nuclear munitions. But successful combat against them can be waged if we include (besides naval forces) long-range aviation and the forces and means of antiaircraft defense.

Operations to destroy enemy carrier strike large units must be conducted with maximum effort and no less energetically than when using nuclear weapons. Even the temporary incapacitation of aircraft carriers will substantially improve the situation for our navy. This is especially important for open ocean areas, where carrier aviation is one of the principal enemies of the surface missile ships and antisubmarine forces of our navy, as well as the most important force in combat against our submarines. The destruction or incapacitation of aircraft carriers, moreover, will also substantially influence the operations of troops in the entire theater. Combat against carrier strike forces will also be a most important task of combat service forces. It requires the broadest possible use of naval missile-carrying and long-range aviation. Therefore, it is advisable for aircraft to have the capability for carrying not only missile weapons with conventional charges, but also torpedoes, bombs, and mines.

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A maximum effort will also be required for combat against enemy antisubmarine forces, since its purpose will be to frustrate his operations in protecting submarine missile carriers and, at the same time, to support the operations of our submarines when entering the areas of combat patrol and when situated in waiting areas and at launching sites.

Simultaneously with the development of active offensive operations in oceans, naval forces will have to fulfil a number of tasks of providing cover from the sea for groupings of troops participating in a strategic operation in the theater of combat operations, conducting amphibious landings, and waging combat on sea and ocean lines of communications in order to break up enemy troop movements.

Thus, we may say the following about the particular conditions under which the navy will fulfil its tasks in a war begun without nuclear weapons.

The main nuclear forces of navies--submarine missile carriers--change from strike forces to reserve forces, which are compelled to remain close to the areas of their launching sites in anticipation of the use of nuclear weapons.

Here there arises the complex but extremely important task of protecting submarine missile carriers. At the same time, the most intense antisubmarine operations must be conducted to destroy enemy submarine missile carriers deployed in areas of combat patrol, as well as those located at bases and in transit at sea.

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All naval forces must be constantly ready to switch over immediately to the unlimited use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, being deployed at sea and being on combat duty at their base locations, they must have on board full supplies of nuclear means. This situation limits to a certain extent the possibility of using naval forces during the non-nuclear period. The basic tasks of the navy will have to be fulfilled by a significantly smaller complement of forces, which will require comparatively more time and effort for the achievement of the assigned goals.

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But all this will be justified as long as the belligerent sides do not switch to tactical nuclear weapons, which, it is assumed, can be used for the attainment of limited goals in theaters of military operations.

It is our distinct impression that tactical nuclear weapons used in armed combat at sea can include practically all atomic weapons of ships and aircraft. The only possible exception might be ballistic missiles with megaton charges, intended for the destruction of strategic ground objectives. Ballistic missiles with charges of lesser yield, used by submarines to hit groupings of ground forces or naval forces located at their bases, and to destroy airfields and base locations of enemy naval forces, can be considered in every way to be tactical nuclear weapons.

Therefore, the transition to tactical nuclear weapons in armed combat between navies will, in effect, be equivalent to the conduct of combat operations with unlimited use of nuclear means, with certain conditions peculiar to this situation. These stem from the fact that naval operations during the period of limited use of nuclear weapons against strategic shore installations are not possible. At the same time, however, submarines, surface vessels, and missile-carrying and antisubmarine aviation will not be limited in their capability to hit with nuclear means both operational-tactical targets on land, as well as all naval and air targets without exception. Here the significance and role of the main nuclear groupings in armed combat at sea change substantially. This will be reflected primarily in the fact that submarines with ballistic missiles will be in an even more disadvantageous position than during the period of non-nuclear operations. Enemy antisubmarine forces in combat with these submarines, once they have been given freedom of action, will not experience any limitations in the use of all the means at their disposal, including nuclear, whose function, as has been stated, falls within the category of tactical weapons. As a result, the effectiveness of their actions will greatly increase, while submarine missile carriers, lacking the opportunity to use their principal weapon--ballistic missiles--and forced to remain in areas of combat patrol,

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can use only defensive weapons, and then only against enemy surface ships and submarines.

Antisubmarine aviation, in this case as well, remains practically invulnerable to the defensive means of missile submarines.

It should be noted that these conditions will apply in equal measure both to our submarines and to enemy submarines which will also be located in the patrol areas. In the process, each side will try to keep these very important groupings of strategic nuclear forces at full combat readiness for the immediate use of missiles in the event that military operations using tactical nuclear weapons should develop into a general nuclear war. In practice this will mean that both belligerent sides will try to make maximum use of their antisubmarine forces to seek and destroy enemy submarines and create the greatest possible obstacles to the operations of the other side's submarines. This fierce battle, embracing three spheres of action--underwater, surface, and air--will probably take the form of repeated armed encounters between naval forces of various compositions deployed in submarine patrol areas and on the approaches to them. It is not impossible that for the attainment of goals in this battle each side will try to use a considerable part of the strike forces of its navy to destroy both the missile submarines and the antisubmarine forces of the enemy.

Under these conditions, we can expect from our probable enemies an increase in activity on the part of his carrier strike large units in combat with our navy and in support of his ground forces in the theaters of military operations. The effectiveness of operations of deck aviation in this case will greatly increase. And this will increase the significance of combat with carrier strike large units. In turn, the vulnerability of carrier strike large units will greatly facilitate combat against them.

It should also be borne in mind that the use of tactical nuclear weapons greatly facilitates the fulfilment of the tasks of destroying naval bases, systems of long-range detection of missiles and submarines, and

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communications and observation centers; and, at the same time, it makes the defense of our own systems of observation and control more complex.

The role of navies in strategic operations in theaters of military operations will increase sharply. The main task of navies will continue to be combat against enemy naval strike forces, primarily against the nuclear strike groupings of his forces. The significance of the mobile rear services of the navy will increase to an even greater degree, especially the means of the seagoing rear services intended for the restoration of combat effectiveness of various forces and means that have used up their weapons or exhausted their autonomy.

Thus, both in a war begun without nuclear weapons, and in one conducted with the limited use of tactical nuclear weapons, naval operations will be carried out under specific conditions significantly different from those of a general nuclear war; and this must be taken fully into consideration when planning and organizing combat operations, and also when carrying out combat service in peacetime.

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